


**NORTHERN  
DEVELOPMENT:**

**AT  
WHAT  
COST?**



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# **Northern Development: At What Cost?**

Labour Day Message

of the

Canadian Catholic Conference

September 1, 1975

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# LABOUR DAY MESSAGE

1975

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## Introduction

1. A cry for justice  
rings out today  
from the Native Peoples  
who inhabit the Canadian North.  
Dramatically,  
on a massive scale  
the Native Peoples of the North  
find themselves  
and their way of life  
being threatened  
by the headlong search  
for new energy sources  
on this continent.

2. At the same time,  
other voices are raising serious  
ethical questions about  
the enormous demands for energy  
required to maintain  
high standards of wealth and comfort  
in industrial society.  
A variety of public interest groups  
are calling for  
greater care of the environment  
and responsible stewardship  
of the energy resources  
in this country.

3. We, Catholic bishops of Canada,  
want to echo these cries for justice  
and demands for stewardship  
in the Canadian North.  
They tell us much

- about ourselves as citizens and consumers,
- about the industrial society of North America,
- about the Native Peoples of the North.

As Christians,  
we cannot ignore the pressing  
ethical issues of northern development.  
For the living God,  
the God we worship,  
is the Lord of Creation  
and Justice.

4. We wish to share with you,  
fellow citizens,  
some reflections and judgments  
on the ethical problems  
posed by the industrial development



of the Canadian North.<sup>(1)</sup>

We hope that these reflections and judgments will contribute to more public debate and stimulate alternative policies regarding the future development of the North,

We also ask that these expressed concerns be tested in the public arena along with other points of view.

### **The Northern dilemma**

5. Since "time beyond memory", the vast land mass that covers the northern tips of our provinces and the sub-Arctic regions has been the home for many of this country's Native Peoples:

Indians,

Inuit,

Métis.

Through time, these Native Peoples developed social, cultural, economic, and religious patterns of life which were in harmony with the rhythms of the land itself.<sup>(2)</sup>

6. This land has been the source of livelihood for a significant portion of Northern Native Peoples, along with a number of early white settlers.

It has been the basis of their traditional economy

— hunting,

— fishing,

— trapping.

For the Native Peoples the land is more than simply a source of food or cash.

The land itself constitutes a permanent sense of security, well-being and identity.

For generations, this land has defined the basis of what the natives are as a people.

In their own words, "Our land is our life".<sup>(3)</sup>

7. After countless generations of occupation, use and care

the Native Peoples of the North have come to claim their rights to these lands.<sup>(4)</sup>

While some northern natives are giving up their life of hunting, fishing, and trapping, these lands remain essential to their future economic development. For these northern lands contain a natural storehouse of some of the most valuable resources on this continent

- potential reserves of oil and natural gas,
- powerful river systems and
- rich mineral deposits.

8. But now the "energy crisis" in the industrial world is posing a serious challenge to the people and resources of the northern lands.

The search for new supplies of

- oil,
- gas,
- electricity

on this continent

is largely focussed on the untapped energy resources of the Canadian North.

9. In recent years, provincial governments, crown corporations and private companies have been planning large scale projects to harness the power potential of the northern rivers.

- Dams,
- power plants,
- railroads,
- highways

are now under construction in several provinces:

- *the James Bay hydro project in northern Quebec;*
- *the Churchill-Nelson hydro development in northern Manitoba;*
- *the Churchill Falls hydro project in Labrador;*



- *the hydro electric plants  
in northwest British Columbia.*

10. Simultaneously,  
the Canadian North has been sighted  
as a major region  
for potential reserves  
of oil and gas.

Assisted by the federal government,  
the giants of the oil industry

- Exxon,
- Shell,
- Gulf,
- Mobil,
- Sunoco,
- and others

have led the way,  
through their Canadian subsidiaries,  
in making discoveries  
and initiating plans to build  
several major industrial projects: <sup>(5)</sup>

- *the Mackenzie Valley pipeline  
in the Northwest Territories  
to bring natural gas  
from Alaska and the Canadian Arctic  
to Southern Canada and the United States;*
- *the Polar Gas pipeline  
designed to bring  
natural gas from the  
high Arctic to the Maritimes  
and the United States;*
- *the Syncrude project  
to develop  
the Athabaska tarsands  
in northern Alberta.*

11. In this way  
the Canadian North is fast becoming  
a centre stage  
in a continental struggle to gain control  
of new energy sources.

The critical issue  
is **how** these northern energy resources  
are to be developed

- by whom and for whom.

We are especially concerned  
that the future of the North  
not be determined by  
colonial patterns of development,  
wherein a powerful few  
end up controlling  
both the people and the resources.

12. Some present examples of industrial planning give us cause for grave concern.<sup>(6)</sup> For what we see emerging in the Canadian North are forms of exploitation which we often assume happen only in Third World countries:

a serious abuse of both  
the Native Peoples  
and  
the energy resources  
of the North.<sup>(7)</sup>

Herein lies the Northern dilemma. What has been described as the "last frontier" in the building of this nation may become our own "Third World".

### **Demands for justice**

13. Our first pastoral concern is that justice be done in the future industrial development of the Canadian North. In various parts of the northern lands the Native Peoples' protests have drawn attention to a series of injustices:

(i) In several cases, governments and corporations have secretly planned and suddenly announced the construction of large industrial projects without prior consultation with the people who will be most directly affected.<sup>(8)</sup> As a result, the future lives of these Native Peoples and their communities tend to be planned for them by Southern interests.

(ii) The plans for these industrial projects are usually finalized and implemented **before** land claim settlements have been reached with the Native People of the region.<sup>(9)</sup> Yet, for people whose land is their life,



and who wish to secure control over their future economic development, a just settlement of their land claims lies at the very heart of their struggle for justice.

(iii) The construction of these industrial projects has sometimes proceeded without an adequate assessment of their environmental and social consequences. In several instances, the building of power plants and hydro dams will cause the flooding of vast areas of land, damage to the vegetation and wildlife, and the relocation of whole communities of people whose lives have traditionally depended on hunting, fishing, and trapping.<sup>(10)</sup>

(iv) The promise of jobs in the construction of these industrial projects has offered no real alternative way of life. For most of the Native Peoples, these jobs are temporary, paying relatively low wages for low skilled labour.<sup>(11)</sup>

14. As a result, more and more Native Peoples are being compelled to give up their land-based economy and move into the urban centres where alcoholism and welfarism have become prevalent for many. While compensation may be offered, money can hardly replace the loss of land and what it means to the lives of the Native Peoples and their future economic development.

15. A sense of justice, coming from the living God, tells us there are better ways of developing the resources of the Canadian North. The Lord of Creation has given mankind the responsibility to develop the resources

of Nature  
so as to make possible  
a fuller human life  
for all peoples.<sup>(12)</sup>

This coincides with the beliefs  
of the Native Peoples  
who have traditionally  
called for  
a "communal sharing" of the land  
which belongs to the Creator.

16. To develop the resources  
of the Canadian North  
is a responsibility  
to be shared by all  
who live in this country  
— North and South.

While Native Peoples  
in the North  
must be prepared to share in  
this responsibility,  
they rightly demand  
that their claims to justice  
be realized.

In the words  
of one Northern Native leader:  
*"... We also want to participate  
in Canadian society,  
but we want  
to participate as equals.  
It is impossible to be equal  
if our economic development  
is subordinated to the  
profit-oriented priorities  
of the American multi-nationals.  
... the Native People are saying  
we must have a large  
degree of control over  
our own economic development.  
Without control  
we will end up  
like our brothers and sisters  
on the reserves in the South:  
continually powerless  
threatened  
and impoverished."* <sup>(13)</sup>

17. Across the Canadian North  
Native Peoples' groups have begun  
to articulate a common program  
for justice.<sup>(14)</sup>



Their goal is greater control over their own economic development. The key is a just settlement of their land claims.

In recent years, native groups have been taking the land issue into the courtrooms to establish their traditional rights to these lands.

18. The living God calls on us to respond to these demands for justice.

Christian love of neighbour and justice

cannot be separated in the development of people.

"For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbour."<sup>(15)</sup>

### **Demands for stewardship**

19. A second pastoral concern is the demand for responsible stewardship of energy resources in the development of the Canadian North.

Throughout this country, public interest groups are raising serious questions about our highly industrialized society and the current exploitation of northern energy resources.

- (i) The scramble for northern energy continues without adequate measures to regulate the patterns of relentless consumption in this country. In the last 25 years alone, Canada's consumption of oil, gas, and electricity has multiplied three times over.<sup>(16)</sup> This extravagant consumption of energy generates increasing demands for the rapid development of northern resources.

(ii) Northern development is also continuing without full public discussion of future energy needs. Governments and industries predict that Canada's energy needs will have to multiply four more times by the end of this century to maintain "a high quality of life".<sup>(17)</sup> But what is this "quality of life" and who determines what these future energy needs should be?

(iii) The reasons for rapidly developing northern energy resources on such a massive scale at this time have also been seriously questioned.<sup>(18)</sup> While the sale of these resources will reap large profits for the energy industry now, it may also cause the rapid depletion of non-renewable supplies of oil and gas required for the future.

(iv) In several cases, this energy is being rapidly developed now to feed the industrial centres of the United States.<sup>(19)</sup> Yet, there are many other countries, especially poor nations of the Third World, that are suffering from acute shortages of energy required for basic survival.

20. The United States and Canada are ranked as the highest users of energy in the world today.

For these two countries, containing little more than 6.5% of the world's population, consume about 43% of the energy supplies of this planet.<sup>(20)</sup>

All this energy goes to run the countless number of machines which have become "our energy slaves" in industries, businesses and homes. It is now estimated,



that given the amount of muscular power  
required to do the work  
of these machines,  
each North American  
has the equivalent of 400 "energy slaves"  
working for him.<sup>(21)</sup>

21. We North Americans -  
have created a highly industrialized society  
that places exorbitant demands  
on limited supplies of energy.

The maximization of consumption,  
profit,  
power

has become the operating principle  
of this society.

These are the driving forces  
behind the present  
continental struggle to gain  
control of northern energy resources.<sup>(22)</sup>

These are the idols  
which turn many  
from service of man and world  
and, thus, from the living God.

22. As a culture,  
we have not faced up to the fact  
that the world God created  
has its limits.

Many voices now warn  
that mankind has reached  
a "turning point" in history:  
crucial decisions  
must be made now

to stop plundering the Earth's  
non-renewable resources  
before it is too late.<sup>(23)</sup>

Yet, this industrialized society  
treats the resources of the Earth  
as if they were limitless.

23. In recent years,  
public interest groups  
have been calling for  
responsible stewardship  
of northern energy resources.

They are calling for  
more effective measures  
to reduce levels of consumption and waste  
and preserve non-renewable resources.

These groups contend that future resource development, which is largely controlled today by multi-national corporations, must be made more accountable to the Canadian public.

24. The living God  
calls us to a life of  
caring,  
sparing,  
sharing

the limited resources  
of this planet.<sup>(24)</sup>

This is no longer  
simply a moral imperative.  
It has also become  
a practical necessity  
for the survival  
of our common humanity.<sup>(25)</sup>

### **Northern alternatives**

25. We readily acknowledge  
that the Catholic Church must also take  
a critical look at itself.  
We now see that,  
coming from another culture,  
the Church may have contributed to  
disruptive changes in Native culture  
while helping to bring Christianity to the North  
through the creative efforts of missionaries  
who have shared the hard lives of the people.  
At the same time,  
the Church has participated with others  
in the wealth and comfort  
of an industrial society  
which places enormous demands  
on energy resources  
at the expense of other people.

26. We look to the past  
in order that we may learn  
to act more responsibly in the present.  
The present industrial development  
of the Canadian North  
poses new challenges  
for the Church.  
Some of our northern dioceses  
have been re-evaluating



their missionary work  
in the light of these challenges.<sup>(26)</sup>  
But the responsibility  
lies with **all** of us  
who comprise the Church in Canada.

27. We believe that  
the Spirit is challenging  
the whole Church to fulfill  
its prophetic service in society today.  
As the Third Synod of Bishops  
asserted in 1971:  
*"Action on behalf of justice  
and participation in the  
transformation of the world  
fully appear to us  
as a constitutive dimension  
of the preaching of the Gospel,  
or, in other words,  
of the Church's mission  
for the redemption of the human  
race  
and its liberation from every  
oppressive situation."*<sup>(27)</sup>

28. We contend, therefore,  
that there are better ways  
of developing the Canadian North.  
What is required today  
is a public search for alternative policies  
for northern development.  
This search is already under way  
through the activities  
of Native Peoples and public interest  
groups across the country.<sup>(28)</sup>

29. We find ourselves  
in solidarity with many  
of these initiatives.  
Based on the ethical principles  
of social justice  
and responsible stewardship,  
we believe  
that the following conditions  
must be met **before**  
any final decisions are made to proceed  
with specific projects for northern  
development:

- a) **sufficient public discussion and debate** about  
proposed industrial projects,

based on independent studies of energy needs and social costs of the proposed developments;

- b) **achievement of a just land settlement** with the Native Peoples, including hunting, fishing, and trapping rights and fair royalties in return for the extraction of valuable resources from their land claims;
- c) **effective participation by the Native Peoples** in shaping the kind of regional development, beginning with effective control over their own future economic development;
- d) **adequate measures to protect the terrain**, vegetation, wildlife and waters of northern areas, based on complete and independent studies of the regional environment to be affected by proposed developments;
- e) **adequate controls to regulate the extraction of energy resources from the North**, to prevent the rapid depletion of oil, gas, and other resources which are non-renewable.

30. It remains to be seen whether Canada's "last frontier" will be developed according to the principles of justice and stewardship. The next two years will be a crucial testing period. In some cases, final and irreversible decisions have already been made. In other instances, there may still be a chance to alter the course of development. The Mackenzie Valley pipeline proposals presently being reviewed by the Berger Commission and the National Energy Board could provide the real test.

31. As Christians, as citizens, we have a responsibility to insist that the future development of the Canadian North



be based on  
social justice and responsible stewardship.  
As responsible citizens  
are we prepared to:

- a) **study** one or more  
of the industrial projects  
in the northern parts of our provinces  
or the Territories?
- b) **actively support**  
Native Peoples' organizations and  
public interest groups  
currently striving  
to change the policies of northern development?
- c) **engage policy makers,**  
both federal and provincial,  
and local Members of Parliament  
in a public dialogue about the ethical issues  
of northern development?
- d) **raise ethical questions**  
about corporations involved in  
northern development,  
especially those corporations  
in which Church institutions may have shares?
- e) **seek a just settlement**  
regarding specific church landholdings  
that are subject to native claims?
- f) **design** education programs  
to examine personal life styles  
and change the patterns of wasteful energy consumption  
in our homes, churches, schools,  
and places of work?
- g) **collaborate** with the other  
Canadian churches, in every way possible,  
in a common Christian effort  
to achieve the above objectives?

32. In the final analysis  
what is required is nothing less  
than fundamental social change.  
Until we  
as a society  
begin to change  
our own life styles  
based on wealth and comfort,  
until we

begin to change the  
profit-oriented priorities  
of our industrial system,  
we will continue  
placing exorbitant demands  
on the limited supplies of energy  
in the North  
and end up exploiting the people  
of the North  
in order to get those resources.

## Conclusion

33. We wish to emphasize that  
this message is only one step  
in the continuing struggle  
for justice and stewardship  
in the Canadian North.

For our part,

we want to join with

- other members of the Catholic community,
- fellow Christians,
- members of the other faiths,
- and fellow citizens.

Together,

we may be able to act

in solidarity with

the Native Peoples of the North,

in a common search for more creative ways  
of developing the "last frontier"  
of this country.

34. Ultimately, the challenge before us  
is a test of our faithfulness  
in the living God.

For we believe

that the struggle for justice

and responsible stewardship

in the North today,

like that in distant

Third World countries,

is the voice of the Lord

among us.

We are called

to involve ourselves in these struggles,

to become active

at the very centre of human history

where the great voice of God

cries out

for the fullness of life.

## NOTES

1. These reflections and judgments are based on a variety of consultations and conversations with people concerned with the future development of the Canadian North. See in particular a recent work by Louis-Edmond Hamelin, "Nordicité canadienne", (Montreal, H.M.H., 1975).
2. For example, cf. Eric Gourdeau, "The People of the Canadian North", and "Impressions of the Land", in *Arctic Alternatives* (Ottawa: Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, 1973).
3. The particular phrase is the title of a documentary produced by the National Film Board and a direct quote from the Cree Indian people of the Mistassini area in Northern Quebec. Variations of this theme are frequently expressed by Native Peoples, throughout the North.
4. Cf. Lloyd Barber, "The basis for Native Claims in Canada", Address to the Rotary Club, Yellowknife, NWT, October, 1974. Mr. Barber is the Indian Claims Commissioner for Canada. See also, René Fumoleau, o.m.i., "As Long As This Land Shall Last", (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1975).
5. Cf. Wade Rowland, *Fueling Canada's Future*, (Toronto, MacMillan of Canada, 1974), chapter two.
6. This concern was expressed in a July 11, 1973, letter to Premier Bourassa by Cardinal Maurice Roy of Quebec, writing as President of the Assemblée des évêques du Québec.
7. Cf. two comparative articles: *Whose Development?* — The Impact of Development on the Native Peoples of Canada and Brazil; *What Price Development?* Foreign Investment and Resources Extraction in British Columbia and Jamaica. Both articles are available from the Interchurch Committee for World Development Education, 600 Jarvis St., Toronto.
8. For example, cf. *l'Aménagement de la Baie James: progrès ou désastre?* par le comité pour la défense de la Baie James, Montréal; *The Churchill Diversion — Time Runs out for the Native People of the North*, available from the Canadian Association in support of Native Peoples, Ottawa; *Northwest Development: What and For Whom*, available from the Northwest B.C. Conference Committee, Terrace, B.C.
9. This has been the case with most of the major energy projects in the North to date. A land settlement is currently being negotiated with the Native People of the James Bay region, but these negotiations are taking place *after* the basic industrial plans have been established.
10. For example, the natives of Nelson House Reserve and South Indian Lake in Northern Manitoba face serious problems of flooding. Cf. "Northern Manitoba: The Project and the People", *Bulletin*, Canadian Association in Support of Native Peoples, December, 1974.
11. For example, during the construction of the Pointed Mountain Pipeline in the Territories, only 30 native people were employed for a maximum of three months, while 320 workers were brought in from the South. In 1970, after the federal government has invested 9 million dollars in Panarctic it has employed only 6 natives at \$1.75 an hour. Cf. Melvin Watkins, "Resources and Underdevelopment" in (*Canada Ltd.* ed. by Robert M. Laxer (Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1973).
12. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 69; *Populorum Progressio*, n. 22.
13. James Wash-shee, President, Indian Brotherhood of the North Territories, cited in the Brotherhood's initial submission to the I Inquiry, 1975.



14. Cf. George Manuel, *The Fourth World*, (Toronto, Collier & MacMillan, 1974).
15. Third Synod of Bishops, 1971. *Justice in the World*, p. 14.
16. Cf. *An Energy Policy for Canada: Phase I*, (Ottawa: Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1973).
17. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 11.
18. Cf. for example, Wade Rowland, *Fueling Canada's Future*, Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, *Gas From the Mackenzie Delta: Now or Later*; James Laxer, *Canada's Energy Crisis; Background Statement on the Arctic*, Pollution Probe at the University of Toronto, March 28, 1972, revised April 12, 1972.
19. Cf. Rowland, *Fueling Canada's Future*, p. 44.
20. Based on statistics provided by Meadows et al. *The Limits to Growth*, a Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind, 1972.
21. Cf. Barbara Ward, and René Dubos, *Only One Earth* (England, Penguin Books, 1972), p. 44.
22. Cf. Ivan Illich, *Energy and Equity*, (New York, Harper-Row, 1974).
23. Cf. Mihajlo Mesarovic and Eduard Pestel, *Mankind at the Turning Point*, The Second Report to the Club of Rome.
24. *Simplicity and Sharing*, 1972 Labour Day Message, Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops. Cf. also Thomas S. Derr, *Ecologie et libération humaine* (Genève, éditions Labor et Fides, 1974).
25. *Development Demands Justice*, a joint statement by Canadian Church leaders, March 1973.
26. Canadian Oblate Conference, *The Religious Situation of the Canadian Native People*, November, 1971.
27. Third Synod of Bishops, 1971, *Justice in the World*, Introduction.
28. For detailed information, cf. *Resource Kit on Northern Development*, available at cost, from the Social Affairs Desk, Canadian Catholic Conference, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa K1N 7B1.

#### Cover:

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Petaloosee with her child, Cape Dorset, N.W.T. by Norman Hallendy. Copyright © Information Canada Photothèque.

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